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The World Bank's Role in Shaping Third World Population Policy

Fred T. Sai
and
Lauren A. Chester

The Bank's comparative advantage in the population field lies in policy development, which it pursues through three main strategies: policy dialogue, sector work, and policy-oriented research.

This paper — a product of the Population, Health, and Nutrition Division, Population and Human Resources Department — is part of a larger effort in PRE to disseminate the Bank's population activities to a broad Bank and non-Bank audience. Copies are available free from the World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20433. Please contact Laverne Bruce-Diggs, room S6-065, extension 31091 (23 pages).

Since the World Bank became involved in population work in 1969, it has sought to influence Third World population policy by undertaking several types of activity: lending, policy dialogue, economic and sector work, analysis and research, and collaboration with other international agencies.

The Bank's comparative advantage lies in policy development. It uses three main strategies: policy dialogue, sector work, and policy-oriented research.

Policy dialogue occurs with government officials and program managers, mainly through discussions, Bank-sponsored seminars, and project development.

Population sector work, which analyzes the population sector in a particular country, provides a base for operational activities and for initiating policy dialogue with program managers.

Population research in recent years has focused on alternative policy and program strategies.

The Bank's work in policy development has contributed greatly to shifts in government population policy in many countries, and its operational strategies have helped shape population programs in others. Its work program in the coming years will continue to stress policy work.

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THE ROLE OF THE WORLD BANK IN SHAPING THIRD WORLD POPULATION POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

"....the rapid growth of population is one of the greatest barriers to the economic growth and well-being of our member states.... The control of population growth is yet another area where the Bank needs to take new initiatives...."

Robert S. McNamara¹

Thus with his first speech to the Board of Governors as President of the World Bank, Robert S. McNamara launched the Bank into the field of population. The Population Projects Department was formed in 1969 and lending in population began in 1970 with a US\$2 million loan to Jamaica. Since then the Bank has committed over \$750 million to 29 population projects in 14 countries around the world. In 1986 alone, \$129 million was committed to population projects: this is on the same order of magnitude as the budget of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and a bit less than half of the budget of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) at that time.

¹ World Bank. 1981. The McNamara Years at the World Bank - Major Policy Addresses of Robert S. McNamara 1968-81. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 12.

The World Bank is an international development bank. Its primary role is to provide assistance to Third World governments in securing economic and social development. While recognizing that the relationship between population growth and socioeconomic development is complex, the Bank remains committed to the view that intervention to reduce the rate of population growth is both a desirable and a feasible component of national development policy. Thus, the primary objective of the Bank's work in population is to help slow population growth by reducing fertility and mortality, and thereby permit faster improvements in productivity, GNP growth and maternal and child health than would be possible if rapid population growth were to continue. To this end the Bank's population activities have been focused on increasing government commitment to developing a policy framework for fertility decline as a national development objective, and providing loans and credits for implementing population programs.

The Bank carries out a number of activities designed to meet its overall development objective as well as its population objective. These include: country economic reports which analyze a country's economic status and the needs of the sectors in which lending is contemplated; sector studies which focus on a particular sector, subsector or cross-sectoral issues in a country; policy dialogue with government officials, which often flows from the sector studies and involves discussion of important development issues including the potential impact of rapid population growth on the development objectives and

strategies; and lending to support projects. All of these activities (except country economic studies) can focus specifically on population. In addition to these, the Bank's population activities include research to improve the understanding of the links between development and population growth, and collaboration and cooperation in international efforts to stimulate concern for and improve understanding of population issues and to encourage consensus on policy issues.

All of these activities can, potentially, influence population policy development. This paper will discuss the role of each of these activities in the Bank's efforts to highlight and give priority to population issues and to help member countries develop national population policies. It will review which activities have had the greatest impact on promoting and facilitating policy development and provide examples of countries where the Bank's influence has been most evident.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE BANK'S WORK IN POPULATION

1. The Bank's Population Work in an International Context

The Bank chose to enter the population field because rapid population growth was seen as undermining attempts to improve living standards in many developing countries and because it was believed that population programs could directly add to human welfare through the provision of family planning services. While the Bank has only been involved in population for about 20 years, it was among the first multilateral agencies to get into this field. UNFPA was established in 1967 and became operational in

1969. The World Health Organization (WHO) accepted the importance of family planning to health and well-being in the late 1960s, but initially would only advise on research to countries that requested help. This was later changed to accept the inclusion of family planning in maternal/child health programs.

2. History of Lending for Population

The establishment of a Population Projects Department in 1969 provided the administrative structure for the Bank's involvement in population. Progress in terms of volume of lending was slow in the early years with only three projects totaling \$9.8 million committed from 1970-1971. As the decade progressed, the volume of lending picked up considerably with over \$306 million committed to 16 projects in 10 different countries from 1972-1979.

In 1979, the Bank decided to begin lending for free-standing health projects. A new Population, Health and Nutrition Department (PHN) was formed to carry out this new work in health and to continue work in population and nutrition. Health became an operational objective, but stress was placed primarily on the relationship between health and population, both in the delivery of family planning services and on the opportunities to open dialogue with countries which had yet to develop explicit population and family planning objectives. The volume of lending continued to increase under this new structure, with 8 population and 18 health projects with population activities approved in 22

different countries between 1980-1986 totaling \$393 million. Most of the health projects with population components are in African countries and while the population components tend to account for a small portion of the project, they also represent a breakthrough in dealing with a very sensitive area that previously may have been considered off-limits by countries or Bank staff.

The Bank underwent administrative reorganization in 1987. Population and health lending activities are now carried out by Population and Human Resources Divisions in Country Departments. In the 1987-88 period, two population projects and eight health projects with population components were approved totaling \$97 million. In all, the Bank has committed over \$800 million to population projects and components since 1970.

3. Commitment of Bank Staff to Population

During the first decade of involvement in the population field, efforts were made to generate recognition of the importance of population issues throughout the Bank and to increase commitment of all Bank staff to the population sector. A series of seminars, designed for regional economists and loan officers, was conducted to inform staff of the far-reaching implications of rapid population growth for general economic development and for individual sectors. It was hoped that as a result of these seminars, regional staff Bank-wide would reinforce and reiterate the message being delivered by Population Projects staff, and thus impress upon governments the importance

of this subject. While it is not possible to determine conclusively how successful these seminars were in persuading Bank staff of the importance of population issues, it is believed by many that they did help build a core of support for population throughout the Bank.

III. SECTOR WORK

4. Description of Sector Work

Population issues can be identified in several types of sector work: country economic reports, non-population sector reports and population sector reports. Country economic reports are done at the beginning of the operational cycle and provide a detailed analysis of a country's economy. Traditional macro-economic issues are analyzed, including those pertaining to production, resource mobilization, fiscal and monetary management, pricing and balance of payments. In addition, these reports often examine such issues as employment, urban and rural development, population, and human resources development. This analysis provides a framework for formulating an appropriate development assistance strategy for the economy as a whole and for some specific sectors. Some country economic reports have included analysis of population growth and the role it plays in economic development. However, use of economic reports as a potential avenue for influencing government population policy has not been fully exploited by the Bank.

Non-population sector work involves a detailed analysis of a non-population sector in a country, not the economy as a whole,

and can provide another useful tool for demonstrating the potential impact of rapid population growth on development of various sectors. For example, in education, population projections are used to estimate future demand for schooling; in agriculture, projections can help estimate future food demand; in water, projections of urban population growth are used to plan for future water and sanitation needs.

Population sector work entails demographic analysis of a country's population situation and an examination of the potential impact of population factors on economic development and vice versa. Population sector work can focus on a specific population issue or provide a broad overview of population issues. Sector work often reviews a population or family planning program's service delivery, its information, education and communication system, and the management structure of the program. The purpose of sector work is primarily to initiate policy dialogue with policy makers and program managers and to provide a base for project identification and development (although projects do not always emanate from sector work). The Bank has completed more than 90 population, health and nutrition-related sector and economic reports between 1969 and 1988. Of these, over two-thirds have been completed since 1979. While only one-fifth of the reports dealt exclusively with population, many of the other reports addressed population issues in detail.

Despite what might be considered an uneven distribution of sector work in favor of health, the Bank's sector work has played

a role in population policy development. Most sector work has been done in countries where there was either no population policy or population program; sector work in countries with more mature population programs (e.g. India) has been extremely limited. Sector work has not always led to project identification (which is not necessarily its goal), but has often contributed to open discussion of population by the government.

5. Examples of Effective Sector Work

Jordan and Turkey are examples of countries where the Bank succeeded in at least raising population as an issue. Despite the highly sensitive nature of population issues in these two countries, the Bank insisted on discussing population in its sector work and the work was accepted by the governments. Although no project followed, the issue was at least brought to the attention of, and discussed with, high-level officials.

The Bank's population sector work was instrumental in helping the Indonesian Government develop its population program. The Bank's sector work supported the Government's innovative ideas for a population program (such as reliance on community involvement) and, in part, formed a basis for the program. The Bank's project work, in turn, has helped the Government implement its ideas.

In recent years, the Bank has increased attention to population issues in sub-Saharan Africa. This region has the highest population growth rate in the world and it continues to increase. Its growth rate is not expected to peak until the year

2000, 30 or more years later than in other major developing world regions. Consequently, the Bank has put considerable effort into trying to bring population issues into the forefront in Africa, and to convince leaders of the importance of population growth in the development process and of the health benefits stemming from lower fertility and child spacing.² Eleven of the 24 PHN sector reports done in 1987 and 1988 were for African countries and all but two looked at population.

Malawi and Zambia were both pro-natalist in the late 1970s. Sector work in these two countries was instrumental in raising population issues and having them discussed openly. Both of these countries organized seminars to discuss the Bank's sector work and subsequently revised their stance regarding family planning. The Bank's health project in Malawi includes a child spacing component.

The World Bank can probably be credited for at least some of the positive movement on population issues in Senegal. The Bank's sector work, based on a sector mission carried out jointly with UNFPA, likely influenced to some degree both government officials (including the President) and regional Bank staff on the importance of population. The population sector work prompted Bank regional staff to talk about population with high-

² Spacing children at least two years apart would reduce infant mortality in Africa by an estimated 5-22%. Deborah Maine, et al. 1985. "Effects of Fertility Change on Maternal and Child Survival: Prospects for Sub-Saharan Africa." World Bank PHN Technical Note No. 85-15.

level officials when discussing terms for a structural adjustment loan (SAL).³ As a result, preparation of a Population Policy Statement and Action Plan became an agreed condition of the release of the 3rd tranche of the SAL. This Population Policy Statement has been drafted, reviewed by the Bank, and will eventually be discussed at a national workshop. It will then go to the President and the Council of Ministers for approval. This policy statement, which contains 60 measures for action, will then be translated into a priority investment program. Here the most important aspects of the policy statement will be highlighted and explicit targets identified.

In Nigeria, Bank support helped lay groundwork for policy formation. Here, sector work was conducted in a somewhat different way. Nigerian consultants, funded by the Bank, conducted the research necessary to suggest a reasonable population policy to the government. This sector work provided a basis for the Futures Group to update its Rapid presentations⁴. These presentations were then used to train Nigerian demographers and to demonstrate why the government was developing a population

³ A structural adjustment loan is non-project lending intended to help developing countries adjust their economic policies and structures in the face of serious balance of payments problems that threaten continued development. The loans support programs that are intended to anticipate and avert economic crises through economic reforms and changes in investment priorities.

⁴ These presentations are computer-generated graphics demonstrating the affects of various population growth scenarios on the development of different sectors, e.g. rate of urban population growth and deforestation.

policy to government officials, religious leaders, etc. The Rapid presentations helped pave the way for eventual approval of the policy.

Sector work should always provide a means for either initiating or strengthening policy dialogue. It provides ideas for policy dialogue as well as intensifying possibilities for project work.

IV. POLICY DIALOGUE

Policy development is a complex and sensitive process. Efforts and techniques used to influence policy must be adjusted to be appropriate to the size, setting and political, social, and economic environment of each country. One of the Bank's major strengths is influencing policy development through policy dialogue. This encompasses a wide range of activities: informal and formal discussions with government officials and pertinent program managers regarding population policy issues, population project design and implementation, sector and economic work, and the participation of high level government officials and managers in Bank-sponsored seminars.

6. Dialogue at All Levels

Given the political, religious and ethnic sensitivity of the issue, simply getting a country to discuss population openly can be regarded as a successful effort to promote population policy development. Dialogue occurs at all levels and can be very effective at persuading a government of the importance of population size, growth and distribution. While the Bank can

only indirectly affect the demand for family planning among individual couples, it can play a major role in influencing government attitude. It can influence governments by providing information about the seriousness of the population problem and by offering analytical, financial and moral support to countries that make serious efforts to address the problem. The Bank's success in policy dialogue is due largely to its access to the highest levels of government and its links with a wide range of ministries. Commitment from the highest levels of the Bank has played a role in the Bank's effectiveness at promoting policy development. Bank discussion of population with Mexican officials in the early 1970s was in part driven by then-President McNamara, and was at least partially responsible for Mexico altering its pro-natalist stance. Former Bank President Clausen's population discussions with the President of Malawi contributed to a change of heart by Malawi's President which helped (along with other activities) lead to acceptance of child spacing as a formal policy in that country. Part of the Bank's efforts to gain approval of the national population policy in Nigeria was a meeting between current Bank President Conable and the President of Nigeria. In Senegal, senior Bank officials met with Senegal's President to discuss population and in part as a result of that meeting the Bank was invited to advise the Senegalese on ways to help reverse the upward trend in population growth.

Another effective tool of the Bank's for policy dialogue is

the use of a Senior Population Adviser. The adviser's role is multifaceted: he provides leadership in discussing the whole range of policy and strategy issues of interest to the Bank in the population field; he provides technical and professional guidance to Bank staff to ensure that the Bank's research and project activities in population respond to the needs of member countries; he acts as a link at the highest possible levels between the Bank and other organizations in the population field. The adviser also interacts with senior officials of member countries to discuss population policy.

7. Seminars to Promote Dialogue

During recent years, the Bank has played a particularly active role in development of population policy dialogue at the regional level in Africa. This has been accomplished by organizing a series of senior policy and management level seminars. These seminars represent a significant effort to reach an important audience. Three Senior Policy Seminars, organized by the Economic Development Institute (EDI) of the World Bank, in collaboration with several other Bank departments, have focused on introducing demographic concepts and increasing awareness among high-level officials of the relationship between population growth and economic development, and the health and welfare of families in sub-Saharan Africa countries. The seminar format encourages open discussions among participants of their experiences and views and provides an excellent opportunity for sharing ideas. In all, about 35 countries have been represented

by more than 90 policy-level government officials and non-government organizations who have participated in these seminars.

In addition, EDI, in collaboration with UNFPA and WHO, initiated a series of training programs in 1987 for mid-level officials from sub-Saharan Africa countries. The first in a series of seminars on Population Program Design and Management was held in 1987 for anglophone countries; the second was held in 1988 for francophone countries. These seminars, which will continue in 1989, focus on a select number of topics which assist the participants in designing an efficient, effective and relevant national program to slow population growth as a means to improving maternal and child health. The centerpiece of the seminar is preparation of an "action plan." In at least two of the countries which participated in the 1987 seminar (Sierra Leone and Malawi) the action plan was expected to provide a starting point for detailed planning and management of the country's population program.

V. INFLUENCE OF POPULATION LENDING ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT

8. Project Description

For population projects, the World Bank works with governments, generally by way of relatively large, long-term loans at low interest to a rather small number of countries where it believes such help can have maximum impact. The majority of Bank-supported population projects have been in Asia, with the bulk of funds committed going to a series of projects in Bangladesh, India and Indonesia. There have been very few

population projects in Africa. However, lending in Africa has increased since the PHN Department was formed, mostly in the form of health projects with population-related components.

Bank projects are typically larger and more complex than those of other donors, often encompassing a full range of national program activities. While this keeps the Bank involved in the central issues of the national program, coordinating all of the elements involved can be difficult and sometimes results in delays and implementation problems.

A notable characteristic of the Bank compared with other donors in the population field is its willingness to provide resources to support "hardware" aspects of projects: construction of clinics, training centers, and other infrastructure. Construction, civil works, vehicles and equipment were the focus of early projects. While these activities continue to be major components of population projects, more emphasis has been placed in recent years on management, institution building, demand generation activities and involving the private sector in service delivery.

Service delivery lies at the heart of the Bank population project strategy. In most countries, initial projects were basically designed to increase the coverage of population activities with basic services. In countries with more than one generation of population project, there has been an evolution towards an emphasis on demand creation and quality of services rather than just on accessibility and coverage of services.

Lending for population projects or population components plays a part in policy development. All aspects of project work, from project identification through implementation and supervision provide an avenue for shaping policy and programs through continuous discussions and dialogue. Operational strategies employed by the Bank can have a strong influence on the country. For example, the Bank was instrumental in persuading Bangladesh to offer voluntary sterilization in their family planning program as part of negotiations surrounding the third population project. The Bank's use of supervision missions, in which a team of Bank staff and/or consultants travel to the project country periodically to monitor project progress, also serves to keep attention focused on population issues and to identify problems as they arise.

VI. RESEARCH

9. Focus of Current Research

Research is done both at Bank headquarters in Washington, D.C., and as part of project activities. In a field such as population where there is great uncertainty as to what is the most effective approach, the potential contribution of research is enormous. The task of developing effective research programs that can influence policy development and be applied is always difficult.

The general theme of recently conducted and current research is the internal efficiency of alternative policy and program strategies. The focus of this research falls into five areas:

- o effectiveness of alternative family planning delivery systems;
- o the role of private sector in contraceptive distribution;
- o incentives for small family size;
- o population projections for use in sector and economic work in the Bank;
- o research with a focus on Africa.

It is difficult to measure the impact that Bank-sponsored research has had on policy development worldwide. Research programs have been somewhat disrupted over the past five years by several reorganizations and changes in management at headquarters. Dissemination of research output has probably not been sufficiently extensive to have a far-reaching influence in policy development.

10. Influential Research Products

Two research outputs in recent years have been widely disseminated and possibly have influenced policy development. These are the 1984 World Development Report (WDR), which focused on population and the 1986 World Bank Policy Study Population Growth and Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa. These papers both relay the message that population is important and have been effective tools in raising the issue. The 1984 WDR was produced to coincide with the 1984 International Population Conference held in Mexico and was the basis of President Clausen's speech at that conference where he reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to

slowing population growth. The 1984 WDR was widely disseminated and discussed at a series of Bank-sponsored seminars worldwide. It continues to be used by universities in many developed and developing countries as training material.

Population Growth and Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa in a draft stage, was used as background reading material for two EDI-sponsored seminars held in Berlin in 1985. The 52 participants from 22 sub-Saharan Africa countries reviewed and offered comments on the paper. As a result, the authors received excellent feedback on the relevance, accuracy and importance of the issues discussed in the paper. Comments of participants were used in preparation of the final draft. The paper provided a framework to raise, identify and discuss population policy issues to be seriously considered in the design and development of overall development planning specifically relevant to sub-Saharan Africa countries.

VII. COLLABORATION WITH DONORS

11. Donor Interaction

The complexity of donor interaction is well demonstrated in the population sector. A multiplicity of donors exists and coordination between donor agencies is needed to avoid contradictory advice, duplication of effort and to ensure that the needs of individual countries seeking assistance are met. For the most part, the major channels for population assistance complement each other fairly well. For example, the Bank is highly dependent on other donors to provide information during

missions, cover aspects of programs with which the Bank is not well equipped to deal, provide grant funding where loan funding is unacceptable, etc. On the other hand, the Bank supports project activities that some other donors cannot (such as construction) and has access to high level government officials (especially in the Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning) that smaller organizations may not.

There are also differences between donors in their criteria for lending for population activities. As mentioned earlier, the Bank focuses on countries where it believes its support can have an impact: for example in population, the Bank has given priority to "key countries"-- those considered to have serious population problems -- among them Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Kenya. UNFPA assists governments and targets about 50 priority countries, generally among the least developed with serious demographic problems. USAID's bilateral assistance goes to governments, but also to universities, research institutions and private organizations. By channeling assistance through private agencies USAID is often able to support family planning activities in situations where overt government involvement is politically difficult. Coordination of donor activities is the responsibility of countries and is an area needing improvement.

12. Co-financing

Collaboration with other donors plays a role in both policy dialogue and development (as noted earlier in the example on sector work in Nigeria) and in co-financing of subsequent

projects. The Bank has tried over the years to take advantage of opportunities to work together with other agencies. Of the Bank's 29 population projects, 14 have been co-financed; of those 14, 7 received at least one-third of their financing from sources other than the Bank. Conversely, in Sri Lanka the Bank's 1988 health project has a \$5 million population component that supports a major UNFPA undertaking.

13. Collaboration and Policy Development

Two good examples of collaboration leading to policy development have already been mentioned. In Senegal, USAID, UNFPA and the Bank worked closely together toward the goal of helping Senegal formulate a population policy. USAID-sponsored Rapid presentations were given to a cross-section of leaders from 10 regions of Senegal demonstrating the impact of rapid population growth on development potential. This effort was a key part of the process of formulating policy.

Work toward a population policy in Nigeria involved a partnership between the Bank, UNFPA and USAID-funded cooperating agencies. Again, Rapid presentations are regarded to have been key to acceptance of the national population policy.

Other collaborative efforts include working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A problem often identified in Bank projects is the difficulty of reaching clients and monitoring provider-client relations at the periphery. Difficulties also arise from the dependence on government service channels. Some of these problems can be overcome in part by use

of intermediaries such as NGOs. Expanded use of NGOs has been emphasized for the past three years. Many individual projects support NGO initiatives e.g., Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Kenya, Zimbabwe and The Gambia.

VIII. CONCLUSION

14. Measuring the Impact of the Bank's Population Work

It is extremely difficult to assess with any certainty exactly what impact the population work of the World Bank has had in shaping population policy in Third World countries. The Bank's performance in population overall, not just policy development, has been evaluated several times over the years: in 1973 by an external group led by Parker Mauldin, in 1975 and 1978 by external panels headed by Bernard Berelson, and most recently in 1987 by George Simmons and Rushikesh Maru of the University of Michigan. All of these reports were basically complimentary toward the Bank's efforts in population. The most recent report was critical of the Bank in several areas (Bank projects lack diversity in project format, projects are too big and complex) but stated that policy dialogue and development were the Bank's greatest strengths: "Perhaps the single most effective element in the Bank's work on population is the policy dialogue that links population issues with other aspects of development."⁵

The Bank's population activities are designed to be

⁵ Simmons, George and Rushikesh Maru. 1988. Population Lending and Sector Review. World Bank PPR Working Paper No. 94.

appropriate to the different levels of policy development that exist in various countries. In countries with no population policy, the Bank's role has been to help identify strategic issues (e.g. the relationship between rapid population growth, national resources and development). In countries with more mature policies, the Bank has been more involved in identifying operational issues, such as demand generation, quality of services and peripheral level management. By adjusting its approach to each country's setting, the Bank can potentially maximize its influence on policy development at different levels.

On an issue as sensitive as population, it seems appropriate to gauge success by the direction a country is moving on population. If a country's attitude toward population issues is moving in the direction the Bank desires, and the Bank is involved at that time in discussions with the government, one can fairly say that the Bank has had some positive influence (and this would be said of any donor involved at the time). Success has to be determined on a case by case basis. Examples given in this paper describe some of the countries where the Bank likely played some role in influencing policy.

The Bank remains committed to working in the population sector. In his speech to the Bank's Board of Governors in September 1988, Bank President Conable stated that part of the Bank's effort to fight poverty must include "determined and sustained action to curb excessive population growth."

It is imperative that developing countries renew and expand efforts to limit population growth... Given the

magnitude and severity of the [population] problem, it is alarming that many governments are failing to implement sensible population policies. It is also distressing that international assistance for population activities has declined. These trends must be reversed.

A vital part of the Bank's work involves development activities that have a strong impact on population.... Population issues will be prominent in our dialogue with governments.⁶

⁶ Barber B. Conable. 1988. Address by Barber B. Conable to the Board of Governors of the World Bank Group. Berlin, West Germany, September 27, 1988.

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